Library of Congress to Modify Structure of Form Subdivisions used for Cartographic Materials

November 13, 2009

On June 10, 2009 the Policy and Standards Division (PSD) of the Library of Congress requested input from the library community about its proposal to change the structure of *LCSH* subdivisions for many cartographic materials (http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/cartographic.pdf). In brief, the paper suggested simplifying form subdivisions used for cartographic materials by removing the adjective (e.g. **–Maps, Comparative** would be revised to **–Maps**). The new genre/form headings would then do the "heavy lifting" of identifying a particular genre or form of material.

PSD staff and catalogers from LC's Geography and Map Division reviewed all of the comments submitted and found that most of them viewed the proposal in a positive light. Therefore, PSD has decided to follow through on its proposal to simplify the subdivisions.

Correspondents did raise valid concerns, which fell into three groups: 1. the need to implement the new form subdivisions and cartographic genre/form headings at the same time; 2. the fact that current systems are often limited in their search and display capabilities; and 3. the need to undertake extensive bibliographic maintenance should the proposal be adopted.

With regard to the first concern, PSD does intend to implement the new subdivisions and genre/form headings simultaneously. It is likely that the genre/form headings will be authorized before the changes to the subdivisions are, but LC will not implement the new policies until all of the components are in place. Additionally, PSD will publicly announce LC's implementation of the new headings and subdivisions several weeks before it takes place, probably in mid- to late-2010.

PSD believes that the second concern – current system limitations – is a short-term problem. The next generation of user interfaces, some of which are already being deployed, will be able to manipulate headings more readily. With the genre/form projects PSD is purposely looking into the future to try to anticipate future needs, and to update *LCSH* in such a way that it can remain relevant into the future.

Bibliographic file maintenance, the third concern that was raised by correspondents, is also a short-term issue. PSD does not in any way discount the time or effort required to update existing bibliographic records, particularly for those libraries whose online systems do not permit global changes. The records in LC's own catalog will also have to be updated. However, it seems sensible to modify the structure of cartographic form subdivisions simultaneously with the adoption of cartographic genre/form headings. In this way, all of the revisions to existing records can occur at the same time.

The staff of PSD sincerely thanks all those who provided comments on the June 10th discussion paper.